



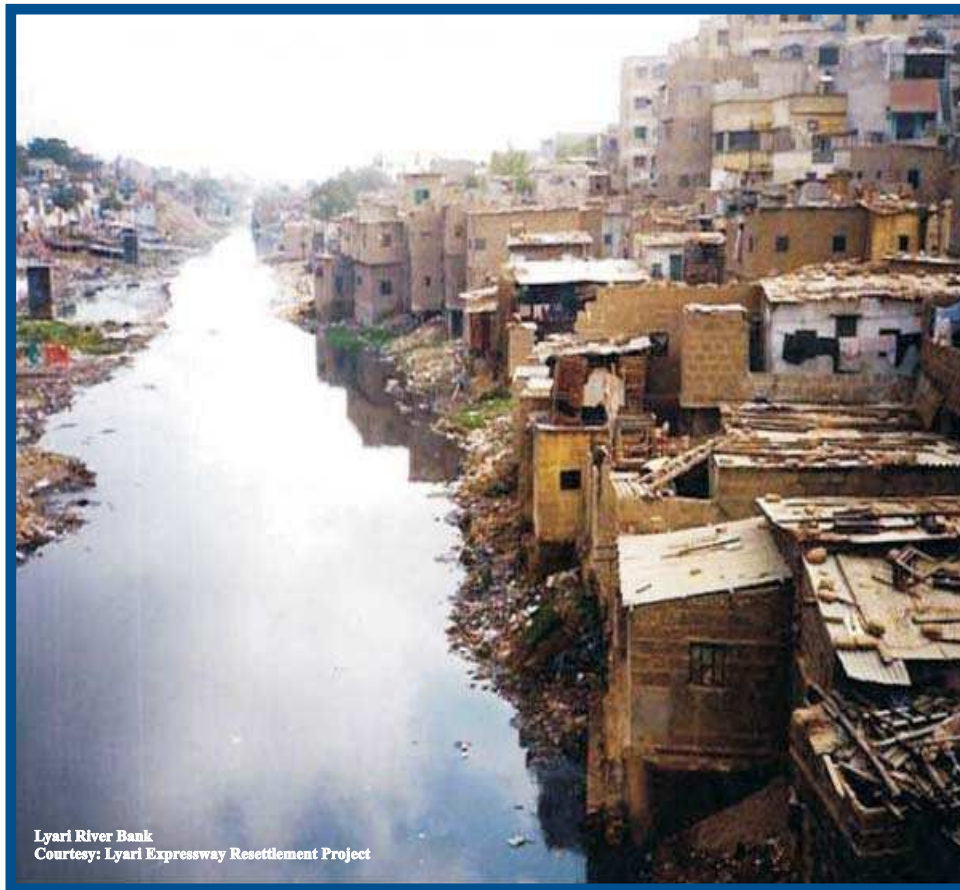
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Development for the Urban Poor



Lyari River Bank
Courtesy: Lyari Expressway Resettlement Project



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Editorial

The extraordinary growth of Pakistani cities that lack conscious urban planning and design is at odds with the objectives and practices of good governance and sustainable development. As can be expected, shortage of urban land, lack of access to housing and services, ecological challenges, unemployment, poverty, social exclusion, difficulties in establishing rule of law, are but some of the problems springing from the unplanned urban sprawl.

Where migration from rural to already saturated urban areas is considered as the main cause of uncontrolled urbanisation, it is not the only reason. Transformation of small villages into towns, towns into small cities and small cities into intermediate ones is also an equally important reason causing unruly urbanisation. What makes it a serious problem is that these transformations generally go unnoticed till the time when the emerging urban centres start demanding more of resources, jobs, houses, services and all that is necessary to sustain the unsustainable development. Finally, this population too turns toward big cities in search of opportunities that the governments are unable to create in their home towns.

The focus of urban development has primarily been on economic growth and related issues of urban centres. The concept of sustainable development, a relatively newer concept, arose in developed economies where it was realized that the cities would not be sustainable with their existing rates of consumption of natural resources. The orientation of sustainability thus is directed toward sustainable use of natural resources, more generally speaking the environment. It is, however, important to mention that this economic growth and resource conservation is ensured through technological innovation and without compromise on the living standard of the populace.

In developing economies, like Pakistan, managing urbanisation is a bigger challenge. For one, we have to concentrate on economic growth and for two, on sustainability.

During the course of urbanisation it is the poor, constituting the major portion of the over all population, who have been suffering the most. Instead of an upward movement in the living standard of the deprived class, they are going deeper and deeper into the deprivation spiral. Their woeful socio – economic condition is a direct result of poor governance, inconsistent and directionless policies and neglectful behaviour of our governments.

The present issue of PJUA revolves around the merits of *inclusive approach* towards urban development that is based on pro-poor stance. The inclusive approach places the vision of the poor and marginalised urban population at the centre of urban development and policy-making. Thus, urban development programmes and projects need to embrace the diversity and aim at dynamic economic growth sustainably.

The PJUA editorial board expects the readers will find the first issue of our journal useful in generating a wider discussion and debate on some of the most pressing issues faced by cities in Pakistan.

Research Article

Pro-Poor Urban Development and the Antecedents of Poverty and Exclusion in Lahore

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Abstract

In recent years, the theoretical conception of an “ideal” trajectory for urban development has shifted away from a focus on physical development to one that highlights the need for improving the living conditions of the urban poor through community building, employment and income generation. However the actual implementation of policy on the ground reveals that these changes have remained largely constrained within the realm of theory. Employing a case study approach this paper looks at the place of the urban poor in the development of Lahore in a historical perspective. Drawing on primary and secondary sources, it is argued that the logic of urban development in Pakistan needs to change in order to make these lower income groups the primary focus of policy.

Introduction

Theoretical Background

The trajectory of urban development in the global South has tended to place a disproportionate burden on the lot of the urban poor. This is not peculiar to one specific country but is in fact, an international phenomenon and is linked to factors like price increases, the decreasing security of formal sector employment, and the reduction of the size of the public sector (Beall, 1995).

In spite of the deteriorating conditions of the lives of these lower income groups, developmental aims have not sufficiently evolved to ameliorate the circumstances in which they live. In the absence of adequate social security provisions, the urban poor tend to fall back on informal support networks and systems, that while being resilient to fluctuations in the economic and political fortunes of the nation, are nonetheless problematic as they tend to either reinforce extant systems of patronage or the effects of conservative cultural practices that then act as a deterrent to social development (ibid).

The problem is not new or an easily surmountable one. It is a problem that is, and historically has been quite severe. Indeed, in 1961, 30,000 families were living in old and substandard houses while another

30,000 were located in squatter settlements (Alvi, 1997). Poor households have continued to increase in number in Pakistan. There was a sharp decline in their number between 1984 and 1987, due to the influx of remittances from abroad. This was however, a temporary change that came about not because of suitable policy changes but because of Pakistani migrants abroad. This is borne out by the fact that throughout the 1990s, poverty in Pakistan has continued to increase (Ali, 2009).

In order to understand the direction that policy should take with intention to cope with this problem, it is necessary to assess the specific context in which the urban poor live and their historical relationship to the developmental priorities of the state. A historical overview is necessary because learning about the circumstances of the urban poor in the past, can often teach for the future. The state priorities that are revealed in the narrative are then indicative of the manner in which urban planning is implemented.

Shifting the Framework of Urban Development

According to Jo Beall (2000), the manner in which urban planning is implemented needs to change in order to adequately incorporate and include the urban poor. This paper applies the general idea advanced by Beall (2000), about the need for urban planning to create “inclusive” cities, on to the Pakistani context.

The argument advanced is that to address the problems of the urban poor in Pakistan, there is a need to shift the logic on which the framework of urban development rests in order to orient it toward viewing the improvement of the conditions of the urban poor as the end to be achieved through policy.

This proposed change needs to be seen not just as a shift in the policy itself, but as a fundamental alteration in the framework of urban development employed, because generalized pro poor policies are not necessarily a solution given that the circumstances of urban poverty are highly contextual, as are the conditions under which the urban poor are shifted and squeezed into marginal or crowded areas in the interests of the wider development of the city with the underlying ideology being one in which these groups

were encouraged to engage in “self-help” (Beall, 2000). Within such contexts, the working poor become subjects to be awarded with “compensation” when they are moved, and thus become designated into a category of population that is considered “mobile”, or within squatter settlements, an “eyesore”. Both these terms are revealing in that they imply a consideration of these groups as being marginal and excluded in the ultimate developmental aims of the city. This observation is further given weight by the fact that even though economic growth in the early 1990s led to an increase in aspects like the urban infrastructure for poorer groups, “...social indicators continue to compare unfavorably with other countries at a similar level of development” (Beall, 1995).

Structure

In order to make an argument for this shift in the logic of urban development, this paper will employ a case study approach. Focusing on Lahore, it uses a historical approach tracing the exclusionary nature of urban development in the city. In essence, the approach used is different from traditional analyses in this field as the account presented here draws from the discipline of social history, and orients itself around poorer groups in order to supplement the existing analyses of the socio-economic and political aspects of Lahore's development which have already been covered in some detail (Qadeer, 1983; Alvi, 1997).

While this paper mainly focuses on the issue of the housing of the urban poor, it draws upon ideas highlighted in other works and surveys that also focus on some of the problems and issues faced by the urban poor. This includes Feron Ahsan's (1986) piece on the problems surrounding service provision with respect to lower income groups in Lahore. In that sense, the issue of housing is connected to these other problems, as the area in which a group lives, directly impacts the type and quality of services they will have access to. Aside from housing off course, service provision to the urban poor, and indeed to the lower income groups in Pakistan more generally continues to be a gargantuan problem. Perhaps, one of the more obvious examples of these is the problem of access and distribution to clean and safe drinking water in Pakistan (Kamal, 2009). However, in this paper, the focus on the issue of

housing is simply meant to serve as an example to highlight the need for changes in the way urban development is conceptualized; therefore the concluding statements apply equally to issues related to service provision.

The first part of the paper will give a historical overview of the relationship between development priorities and the urban poor in Lahore. The second section will contain an assessment of what the insights in the first part can tell us about how policies should change. The third portion will conclude with a set of policy recommendations for future developments.

A Historical Perspective of Spatial Divisions and Planning Priorities in Lahore

Developmental Priorities in Lahore in Colonial Times

Drawing on John Taylor and David Williams' (1983) work, Desmond McNeill asserts that the first phase of urban planning in postcolonial countries can be traced back to the colonial period when the imperative of the state was the simple maintenance of the urban infrastructure in a manner akin to “house-keeping” (McNeill, 1983). In other words, the colonial government did the bare minimum required while focusing mainly on simple expansion and maintenance. Improving the conditions of the urban poor in the city remained a problem that was delved into only on paper. This is indeed, what happened in the city of Lahore in the colonial period. In fact, even colonial officials observe that there is very little that is actually known about the urban workforce or urban economic transactions in Lahore, and indeed very little effort is expended to find out more (Punjab Revenue Department, 1927; Sullivan, 1928). While many general documents and assessments that survey the deplorable conditions of the urban poor (particularly in the walled city) are produced; for instance those produced by Sullivan (1928) and Geddes (1917), barely any effort is actually made to improve the conditions of the lower income groups.

To an extent, this was the case because the priority of the colonial state was the agricultural areas. Accordingly, the planning and development of the

very small urban areas was not really a priority for the government at that time.

In spite of the urban areas being quite low on the list of priorities of the colonial state, on the surface, the city of Lahore at the end of the 19th century could have seemed like a triumph of colonial planning. This was because the colonial city consisted of certain well-laid out areas, due to the creation of “neat” divisions in Lahore between the Mall, the Civil Lines and the Walled City. The laying out of the City in this manner was based both on the need for order as well as the need felt by the British to have some degree of separation between themselves and the local population. However, these divisions in reality were by no means watertight. From 1920 onwards the process of “mixing” between these regions increased with the rise of a new indigenous middle class who wanted to move out of the dirty, crowded conditions in the old city but could not afford bungalows of the type used by the British. This was then followed by a process of adaptation resulting in the formation of buildings and settlements that have been characterized in the past as a new “indigenous” urban form (Qadeer, 1983).

Far from reflecting a degree of amalgamation between local and colonial forms of urban development, these developments actually served to further differentiate the spaces of the “haves” and “have-nots” in the city of Lahore. For instance, the upper and middle class residents of Lahore came together to form initiatives to build residential areas such as Model Town (Glover, 2008). In sharp contrast to the planned houses and gardens that were arranged in this area, areas within the walled city, where the poorer residents lived were described as being full of “numberless encroachments” where the streets were blocked by standing cattle and the passerby would encounter “...pocket after pocket of foul and stagnant air” (Sullivan, 1928). While these divisions in space became physically more obvious, there was still interaction between the commercial and professional bourgeoisies and the working classes in the city. For instance there is evidence to indicate that certain working class localities in the walled city were arranged around the residence of a local notable who

was then an important source of patronage for these poorer groups (Murphy, 1996). Lastly, There is also evidence to indicate that the attention the colonial officials paid to the planning of their own areas did not apply to areas like Gawalmandi, where streets and alleyways were built without giving thought to existing structures making this area badly congested that there remained barely any distance between shops and buildings on the street (Geddes, 1917).

Continuities in Developmental Priorities in Postcolonial Lahore

The marginal position attributed to the needs of the working poor when planning for the development of residential areas continued into post-Partition Lahore. In the initial years the first problems that had to be dealt with in the city of Lahore involved the refugee crisis. This crisis meant that there was an immense, perhaps historically unprecedented, shortage in housing. Initially, the attempt was to meet the demand by allocating existing structures that had been evacuated. When evacuee houses had been used up, new planning projects were initiated to meet the ever increasing demand for housing. However, the houses produced by these schemes were too expensive to be a viable option for poorer groups (Alvi, 1997).

This is consistent with the general trend practiced in the 1950s and 1960s by the governments of developing countries of building large housing schemes, which were generally acknowledged to have failed to achieve their aims by the 1970s (Beall, 2000). The question that then arises is why were these schemes deemed to have failed?

The reason for this failure in the context of post Partition Lahore was that the poor began to settle themselves in the interstices of planning projects all over the city as they were unable to afford space within the projects themselves. That is not to say that these efforts to find alternative housing were made independently solely on the initiative of these poorer groups. Usually it was some influential who would be working in co-ordination with an official to provide land to these people. As this occupation and

settlement was illegal, these groups lived in a constant state of insecurity, where they could be evicted at any time; a situation which made them very vulnerable to political manipulation (Qadeer and Sikander, 1978). The threat to eviction also meant that these groups then had virtually no security of tenure as they could easily be coerced by those who controlled the area. This sort of political leverage is then an example of the sorts of deterrents to social development that are discussed by Beall (2000).

A historical analysis made by Ian Talbot (2007) asserts that migrants were actually able to assimilate within Lahore due to the large amount of space left over by evacuees and the greater absorptive potential of the city. He makes this argument while discussing the effect Partition had on migrant groups, and how their experiences were mediated by the specific context of the cities of Amritsar and Lahore (Talbot, 2007). However, when talking about Lahore, Talbot's focus on patterns of assimilation and the advantages migrants had in Lahore overlooks the class composition of the migrants in question. Why is this important? It is important precisely because the allocation of land in the post Partition milieu was determined by how much land the refugees already owned across the border (Ali, 1967), and thus assimilation depended as much on the independent wealth of the refugees as it did on the "absorptive" potential of the city.

While discussions of rehabilitation and compensation procedures with regards to the urban poor may seem like a simple one step process, this was far from being the case. For instance, Talbot (2007) illustrates how the post partition takeover of Anarkali bazaar by Muslims was a "striking" development. He then uses this to argue that "By filling such niches refugees contributed to the city's growth without arousing local animosity" (Talbot 2007, 173). What this misses however, is that the rehabilitation of refugees was not a one off process, but was being constantly renegotiated throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s. The migrants were not just permanently settled in the areas they initially occupied, but were being moved and re-settled as policies shifted, and the aims of urban development were renegotiated.

In other words, while Muslims may indeed have taken over particular spaces, unless they could prove that they had equal property across the border, they were not able to retain their land. This qualification resulted in several unauthorized refugees squatting in urban evacuee buildings in order to try to act as if they were the rightful owners of what they tried to pretend was non-evacuee property. In a desperate attempt to "unearth hidden evacuee property", the government released a press note declaring that those who would help them find these miscreants would be given preference in the transfer of such property, if entitled under the Displaced Persons (Compensation and Rehabilitation) Act of 1958 (All Pakistan Legal Decisions, 1962).

While these historical factors and the effect of development schemes that did not include the urban poor (as discussed above) became an increasingly clear physical divide between the housing of upper and lower income groups, these groups were connected nonetheless through commercial activities. These activities ranged from things as diverse as the provision of khokhas, stalls, and vegetable and fruit markets. They were also connected through a flow of domestic servants, sweepers and others who catered to the needs of the "bungalow-walas" (Qadeer, 1983). The wide range of activities was reflective of the economic bases of Lahore. The division of the population between various activities was fairly evenly divided and it was impossible to characterise Lahore along any kind of clear zonal division. There existed no clearly demarcated divide between the spaces occupied by informal workers, artisanal and industrial labour. And indeed, while the upper class localities and residential areas are visible on the cityscape, they were (and even today are), intimately linked to the residential areas and the economic activities of the working poor.

Aside from the spatial divisions that existed between different income groups in the city of Lahore at different historical junctures, at different historical junctures, the urban poor in Lahore were also displaced and moved around to accommodate the developmental aims of the city. An example of this occurred in 1955 when the provinces of West Pakistan

were integrated to form “One Unit” and Lahore was declared to be its new capital. Tan and Kudaisya (2000) assert that this move actually “redeemed” the status of Lahore from a border city into an important centre (ibid.). The status of Lahore as the new capital was accompanied by the need to modernize the city and to clean up areas that were seen as being filth laden “plague spots”. Unfortunately, clearing up involved not only the moving of physical waste, but also the relocation of people who were seen as contributing to the creation of these “plague spots”. One such community was that of the gujjars.

It was suggested in 1956 that a “gujjar colony” be set up slightly out of central Lahore to make the city cleaner. 150 acres were purportedly set aside for this purpose on Harike Road near Harbanspura that was supposedly, already prepared to accommodate this shift (Pakistan Times 9th May 1956, 3). However, when the gujjars refused to vacate the area in spite of threats of legal action, the District Magistrate passed an order under the Punjab Public Safety Act, directing that the possession of milch cattle was not allowed in specific areas of Lahore. The order was based both on considerations of cleanliness and on the fact that these cattle owners were residing on valuable evacuee sites (All Pakistan Legal Decisions 1958, 257-8). It is interesting to note however, that the court took cognizance of the fact that the promised location on Harike road was not prepared or large enough to accommodate all of the gujjars, and dismissed the orders of the district magistrate accordingly (ibid).

This imperative to clean up Lahore to give the space a semblance of order was also reflected in the policies of the late 1950s, which aimed at the demolition of katchi abadis. The wider context in which this took place was one in which industrial expansion was picking up pace in Lahore. The need for workers housing was not met either by planning authorities or by the state and accordingly these workers banded together and built houses for themselves. Thus, when the demolitions took place, these workers and katchi abadi residents took to the street in protest (Qadeer 1983, 87). In response to these agitations the government launched cheaper more affordable housing schemes such as the Kot Lakhpat Township Scheme in Lahore (Alvi, 66).

This scheme however, was not implemented until the mid 1960s, and even then the actual area allocated for the housing of migrants was significantly reduced. The area itself was planned at a distance of ten miles from the centre of the city. Even while this was seen as a problem, it was deemed to be necessary to move the squatter colony residents out of the city (West Pakistan Housing and Settlement Agency, 1965).

The above example of Kot Lakhpat points toward a problem with building housing for lower income groups that continues to exist even today. The set up of “Khuda-ki-Basti” or KKB4 in Kala Shah Kaku in 2006 fell prey to the same problems. The lower income groups found that they had to spend a substantial amount of their income in simply commuting to and from work. The reason for this was the distance between the north of the city where most of the residents worked, and the housing scheme itself (Zaidi and Siddique, 2008). The problem visible from this is the fact that there needs to be a greater consideration of what the effects of displacement on the urban poor will be and what their preferences are, as opposed to simply prioritising the physical set-up of a planned area. These economically disadvantaged groups then find their own solutions or do not avail these planned spaces at all while because these spaces meet the requirements of the developers of the city, they do not necessarily meet the requirements of the urban poor themselves. As such, the existence of developed, yet empty plots and the proliferation of affluent neighbourhoods that can give greater returns are both indicative of a city that excludes its poorer majority.

In summary, this section has sought to discuss some of the historical conflicts between the urban poor and the state. The main assertion being made here is that the “imperatives” of the city that have varied from factors like “cleaning up” the city, and making it more modern, or initiating housing schemes have mostly been initiatives that have tended not to substantially engage with the needs of the urban poor. with the needs of the urban poor. Indeed, (as shown above) there is a tendency to move these poorer groups in order to make space for other developmental priorities. The next session will now proceed to analyze these priorities using the two examples of the

Lahore Urban Development Project and the Katchi Abadi Improvement Programme. The aim of this next section will be to highlight the need for a more uniform, regularized and consistent approach to dealings with the urban poor.

Analysis of Priorities

Project – Oriented Approach and the example of the Lahore Urban Development Project

In order to cope with the continual shortage of housing, the approach adopted at this time (i.e. until the 1970s) was project and problem oriented. This approach did not allow for any significant institutional development which could have emerged, had a more process oriented approach been adopted. A project oriented approach to urban planning can be problematic because it often does not take account of the wider context of the spatial development of the city. In that sense, the more long term policy measures that could come out of a process oriented approach end up being circumvented even though, these can prove to be a more sustainable option in the long run. For instance, instead of building new houses, it is possible to make more substantial gains for the urban poor by amending the land tenure system in order to encourage people to undertake construction themselves. (McNeill, 1983)

One of the effects of this project oriented approach has been that the institutions in charge of and the procedures followed for Lahore's local urban development has not become streamlined or efficient. The obstacles to the development of each project then have to be dealt with repeatedly at the beginning of each project. In other words, every new initiative encounters serious hurdles in the process of its implementation. An example of this is Lahore's first Master Plan. Although its preparation began in the 1960s, it was not actually finalised and approved until 1972 by which time, data in the plan was outdated (Hameed and Nadeem 2006, 48).

Similar problems were encountered in the much more recent Lahore Urban Development Project funded by the World Bank.

The project itself was intended to build better housing and improve access to services focusing on the Walled City for upgrading and Gujjapura for a scheme to improve sites and services (World Bank, 1994). However, the delays and problems encountered by the programme were blamed on the poor performance and limited experience of institutions like the Lahore Development Authority as well as on the problems faced in the acquisition of land (ibid). These hurdles indicate that the same problems that were faced in the 1960s and early 1970s continue to plague the city in the contemporary period, where there is both a lack of properly formulated procedures to carry out projects, as well as a deficiency in the strength and efficacy of local level institutions.

The Logic of Planning and the Example of the Katchi Abadi Improvement Programme

Not only is there a problem with the viability of the procedure followed to implement these schemes, there are flaws in their very logic. The problem remains the fact that the people, who should be seen as the main beneficiaries of these schemes, are seen as secondary to finding efficient and cost effective measures to build these schemes. In other words, urban planning tends to not substantially consider the social lives of the urban poor. In this case the consideration of their social lives would mean that the location of the scheme itself needs to consider their places of work, access to facilities and so on, which are then an important part of determining their choice of places to live. Indeed, some individuals and families in the lower income bracket continue to live in katchi abadis because it allows them to live in a more convenient location where the services already existing in the city are easily accessible to them (Alvi, 1997).

Given that these social considerations of the urban poor are going to determine whether or not they make use of planned schemes, it is no surprise that many of the developed plots in the planned urban areas in Lahore are lying vacant due to factors like the high price of land, the high cost of construction and the limited facilities in and around the scheme itself (Bajwa et. al n.d.). That is not to say that there have not been some schemes that appear to have had a positive

effect. Indeed, the Katchi Abadi Improvement Programme in the 1980s and 1990s has been understood to have mitigated some of the negative effects of unemployment and also created a rise in the property value of some katchi abadis (Anwar and Zafar, 2003).

While the literature on more recent developments in the context of Lahore is extremely limited, interviews conducted with certain key individuals in planning bodies shed light on the current state of affairs. On the first level, the function of a body like that of the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) is to upgrade and increase the amount of “urban” area within the city. This priority is clearly delineated in its most recent projected Master Plan for 2021. The residential areas are projected to increase and widen the size of the city (Master Plan, 2021).

However, the LDA is not the sole body in charge of low income housing. Indeed, most low income housing schemes tend to be produced on a project by project basis and are often funded by international loans and aid, as most recently done by organisations like USAID. In effect, this means that the more constant foci revealed in the trajectory followed by planning and development in the city are not the urban poor.

On one level, this is understandable given the limited amount of available funds and the huge number of procedural issues such as court cases, that these schemes run into, in spite of the best efforts of the officials, who are in charge. However, this means that planned schemes tend to result in housing that is too expensive for poorer groups to afford. As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, part of the reason for this is linked to global issues such as international price increases and the rising rate of inflation. These may be global issues but have very tangible effects on the local context and in this case, on urban development in the city of Lahore. For instance, in LDA's recent “Avenue 1” scheme for government servants of all grades, it was found that the initial prices of plots had to be adjusted to meet the increase in development expenditure. For instance, within this scheme, in 2004, the price of a 1 kanal plot, originally fixed at Rs. 5,40,000 was increased by Rs. 3,24,000, while the 10 marla plots, initially set at Rs. 2,70,000 were increased

by Rs. 1,62,000. Given how high these figures are, it becomes apparent that people who are paid the minimum wage and below in Pakistan, have very limited options to choose from. The solution needs to be one that minimises government expenditure while allowing for minimum disruption to the urban poor.

The logical conclusion that follows this appraisal is perhaps the focus for the betterment of the urban poor should be on upgrading and improvement of existing housing and structures as opposed to moving out these segments of the population by building housing schemes that are disconnected from urban services and facilities that exist within the city centre. It is a shift in precisely this sort of logic that can turn Lahore into a more inclusive city.

Recommendations

The concluding recommendations that can be gleaned from the above history and assessment are:

1. There exists a need to move from a project to a process oriented approach. A long term scheme along with the ideals of urban development in Pakistan needs to be worked out at the government level. In the specific context of Lahore, this need has already been observed by Qadeer (1983), who observes that “development schemes” became an integral part of planning in the city, even going so far as to state that “...plot development is what city planning has come to mean in Lahore” (ibid, 238)
2. Assessment of social and cultural priorities of the urban poor needs to be conducted along with surveys of funding, impact assessments and so on. The problem of lack of detailed information has been acknowledged in the past (Qureshi et. al n.d.), but this need for information is understood generally in the technical and instrumental sense. This needs to change, and there should also be acknowledgement of need to gather information about social and cultural realities. Studies of the problems and prospects of urban governance are a positive move in this direction.
3. While the construction of low cost housing is

important, there is a need to also focus on upgrading existing settlements instead of moving the urban poor out of the main city. For instance, certain groups that exist in the interstices of affluent neighborhoods perform and have historically performed important functions in the everyday exchanges that take place in the urban economy. Thus, it is impractical and unsustainable to move them out of those areas. Rather, the focus should be on improving existing settlements. This applies not only to housing for the urban poor but for their economic activities as well.

This can be done by streamlining the process by which the urban poor are dealt with, and by improving existing occupancies. For instance, the area right off Noor Jehan road on the beginning of Park View Street across Liberty Market has recently seen the removal of illegal encroachments in the form of shops. However, the decision taken regarding the area occupied by flower vendors directly adjacent to this building, (who also originally fell into the category of illegal encroachments), was to regularize their occupancies. A more uniform application of “regularisation” over “removal” of encroachments is one potential way to allow for minimum disruption while still carrying out urban development.

4. When the shifting of certain groups of the urban poor is necessary, the process should be gradual. A more realistic assessment of costs and time required to implement projects needs to be conducted. In the actual building of the project, proximity of transport networks into the city needs to be given the highest priority.

In the final analysis, the betterment of the conditions of the urban poor is possible, especially in the contemporary context where it is given an increasingly higher priority. Nonetheless, in order to effectively meet this aim, it is necessary to shift the framework of urban development. The low income groups are given a higher priority and they are effectively integrated into the overall urban development and planning process.

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Urban Governance Reforms In India: Lessons For Developing Countries-A Casestudy

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Abstract

Developing countries across the world are facing problems related to provision of basic amenities to all its citizens. Static role of urban institutions have been identified as one of the important reasons for lack of transparency and effectiveness in urban governance, which ultimately affects adversely the provision of basic amenities. Urban reforms have been considered as a panacea for the existing urban problems, both by international funding agencies as well as national governments. With the launch of the new economic policies of liberalization, India too introduced urban reforms as mandatory requirements for all states and cities accessing government funds for infrastructural development. The following paper tries to enlist the reforms undertaken in India and identifies the rationale behind their implementation.

Introduction

The Urban centers of India constitute the world's second largest urban system. They contribute to over 50% of country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and are central to India's economic growth. For these cities to realize their full potential and become true engines of growth, it is necessary that focused attention be given to the improvement of infrastructure and basic amenities to the poor therein. To achieve this objective, a Mission mode approach is essential. Accordingly, Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) was launched in 2005. JNNURM aims at reform-driven, planned development of cities and towns on a Mission mode, focusing on community participation and accountability of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) / Parastatals towards the citizens to be completed during 2005-12 with a funding of `Rs. 66,000 crores. This paper highlights the basic tenets of the reforms under JNNURM and the key outcomes expected. This may provide a good practice roadmap for other South Asian countries, which are facing similar problems of urban governance.

Mission Components

The Mission comprises two sub-missions – Urban Infrastructure and Governance (UIG) and Basic Service to the Urban Poor (BSUP). These two Sub-Missions are implemented in selected 65 cities. Other

Other cities and towns are covered under the two schemes of Urban Infrastructure Development for Small & Medium Towns (UIDSSMIT) and Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP). The Ministry of Urban Development is the nodal Ministry for UIG & UIDSSMT. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA) is the nodal Ministry for implementation of BSUP and IHSDP. UIG and BSUP envisage that the city prepares a long-range perspective plan and a medium-range development plan based on which detailed project reports are required to be prepared for seeking Central Assistance.

Urban Sector Reforms

JNNURM is a reform-driven and signs the Memoranda of Agreement for reforms by the State and the Urban Local Bodies with the Government of India, which is a pre-requisite to access additional central assistance under the Mission. Urban reforms include mandatory and optional reforms to be implemented by both ULBs and States (23 reforms in total). Both the mandatory and optional reforms are to be implemented by the States and ULBs within the Mission period as per the timelines committed in the Memorandum of Agreement.

Out of all the reforms envisaged under JNNURM, three reforms that pertain to the urban poor are critical for BSUP and IHSDP. They are:

- I Earmarking at least 20-25 % of development land in all housing projects (both public and private agencies) for Economically Weak Sections (EWS)/Low Income Groups (LIG) category with a system of cross-subsidization.
- II Implementation of a 7-point Charter, i.e. provision of basic services to urban poor including security of tenure at affordable prices, improved housing, water supply, sanitation and ensuring convergent delivery of existing universal services for education, health and social security within the Mission Period according to agreed time lines and prices.
- III Internal earmarking within the local body budgets for basic services to the urban poor, eventually leading to development of basic services to the Urban Poor Fund.

The essence of the above reforms are threefold:

- I. The urban poor should be enabled to have access to land and not squeezed out of the urban land market in the face of sky-rocketing prices;
- II. Basic services have to be provided to the urban poor based on agreed milestones and deliberately planned efforts to develop “inclusive” cities. These reforms are to be undertaken in conjunction with the other reforms aimed at creating an enabling framework of good urban governance for sustainable development of cities and towns; and
- III. Dedicated budget/fund should be created at the city/state level to ensure steady flow of resources for urban poverty alleviation and for slum up gradation, including provision of land and housing to the poor.

While the implementation of the overall reform agenda under JNNURM is being monitored by the Ministry of Urban Development, the Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation is specially monitoring the above three reforms, in addition to tracking the progress of the other reforms under JNNURM from time to time.

State Level Reforms: Mandatory Reforms

Implementation of the 74th Constitutional Amendment

The 74th CAA requires the state governments to amend their municipal laws in order to empower ULBs “with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self governance”. The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 provides a basis for the State Legislatures to transfer various responsibilities to municipalities and to strengthen municipal-level governance. Accordingly, several state governments have amended their Municipal Laws by bringing them in conformity with the Constitutional provisions

JNNURM reforms have specified the following provisions of the 74th CAA to be addressed through this reform:

- A. Municipal Elections
- B. Constitution of District Planning Committee and Metropolitan Planning Committee
- C. Constitution of State Finance Commission
Convergence of Urban Management Functions

Integration of City Planning and Delivery Functions

JNNURM, in order to strengthen institutional convergence and associate and engage ULBs, stresses the convergence of planning and delivery of urban infrastructure development and management functions. The main objective of this reform is to secure effective linkages between asset creation and asset management so that the infrastructural services created in the cities are not only maintained efficiently, but also become self-sustaining over time. Therefore reform calls for effective cooperation between the Municipalities, Panchayats, Government Departments including Public Health Engineering, Public Works Department, Fire, Police and others; parastatals, and others involved in service delivery.

Rent Control Act

The rent control laws were initially enacted as temporary acts and a short-term measure to overcome transient problems emanating from unusual situations. In many states, these laws incorporated a sunset clause stating the period at which the law will terminate. The provisions in the laws were designed keeping in view the short-term nature of the enactments. Continuation of these acts over a long period without amending such provisions has had various adverse consequences like depletion in supply of rental housing, distortions in rental housing market and negative impact on urban finances.

Rationalization of Stamp Duty

High rates of stamp duty and their adverse effects on the economy, and consequently the need to reduce them have long been underlined by various committees and experts. They have pointed out the high cost that stamp duties impose on the economy and

economic growth. Specifically, they have argued that:

- High rates of stamp duty lead to undervaluation of properties, resulting in substantial loss of revenue to the states and the ULBs. Undervaluation of properties is commonly observed and is the main source of corruption and black money in the country.
- High stamp duty rates hamper development of the economic system, and adversely affect growth.
- Existence of high duty rates in some states and low or moderate duty rates in others lead to diversion of economic activity, which is often unhealthy and economically inefficient.

Repeal of Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act

The following are the principal reasons why Urban Land Ceiling Regulation Act (ULCRA) should be repealed:

- Vast tracts of land in cities are expected to be released for development. This will bridge the gap between demand and supply in the real estate sector of various states.
- The housing sector will receive a big boost. The increase in the supply of land will improve accessibility and affordability for the urban poor.
- It will tend to improve transparency and efficiency in land acquisition, which would encourage domestic and foreign investment in the real estate sector.
- The administrative fees payable under ULCRA for getting permission for land development, which are sometime as high as Rs.100 per square feet, would be done away with and the benefits passed on to the consumers.

Community Participation Law (CPL)

Citizen participation is essential for making democratic processes effective and for strengthening them. It provides a platform to citizens to influence

policy/program development and implementation. While various platforms and systems for citizen participation have developed organically, but there is a need to institutionalize them to make them effective and sustainable. The CPL aims to institutionalize such community participation platforms/systems. If implemented in its true spirit it will have the following advantages:

- It will help deepen democracy, facilitate efficiency and sustained socio-economic growth and promote pro-poor initiatives.
- It will help in improving urban governance and service delivery.
- It will promote transparency and accountability in governance.
- It will improve the quality of the decisions made, as these would be based on knowledge of local realities and requirements.
- It has significance for regional planning structures like the District Planning Committee (DPC) and the Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC) both of which require citizen participation in planning from the grassroots level.
- Citizens will have a say in determining how information is shared, policies are set, resources are used and plans/programs are implemented realities and requirements.

Public Disclosure Law

Public disclosure is essential for accountability within as well as outside the municipal system for the following reasons:

- First, this criterion builds a channel between the local, state and the union levels of India's federal government structure for effective communication through voluntary disclosure of information. This aids the audit of finances and operational performance of ULBs. It also helps create an environment of healthy competition

between different ULBs in the delivery of good quality of life to their citizens.

- Second, by making information accessible to the citizenry, it plays a leading role in enabling the effective use of the participatory platforms to influence municipal policies. This reform can also be seen as supplementing another key reform criterion of JNNURM, namely, enactment of Community Participation Law by helping it achieve informed participation. Thus, public disclosure makes ULBs more accountable not only within the federal structure, but also outwardly to the citizen as well.
- Third, the PDL also allows ULBs to be accountable to a variety of other stakeholders with which they must increasingly interact including lenders, credit rating agencies, donors, private contractors and so on. The creation of a robust platform for the disclosure of municipal finances will facilitate easier evaluation of municipalities in accessing funding from lenders and capital markets, as well as reduce the cost of borrowing over time. This is especially important given that ULBs may need to access market-based financing for at least some portion of their capital investment requirements. In accessing funding from lenders and capital markets, as well as reduce the cost of borrowing over time. This is especially important given that ULBs may need to access market-based financing for at least some portion of their capital investment requirements.

Optional Reforms

Introduction of Property Title Certification System

JNNURM requires certain reforms to be undertaken by states/cities towards putting in place an effective Property Title Certification System. The cities need to ensure proper management and record of all property holdings within the city. The new system should reflect authentic ownership at all points and information on the holdings should be easily accessible.

Earmarking 20-25% of developed land in all housing projects for EWS/LIG

Of the total housing shortage in a city, a large proportion nearly 99% is of the Below Poverty Line (BPL)/EWS and LIG households. The reform on Earmarking Developed Land (EDL) in all housing projects will reduce housing shortage among BPL/EWS and LIG households by increasing the supply of land for housing the poor. This reform will ensure that local governments/agencies take active steps to increase supply of land and housing and to make them more affordable for the poor. In the long term, availability of affordable land/housing will discourage squatting by the poor on public lands and create slum free cities. It will also sustainably reduce urban poverty by providing legitimate access to better services and economic opportunities.

Simplification of Frameworks for Conversion of Agricultural Land to Non-agricultural

Rapid economic development and consequent urbanization; growth in the housing sector; improved national highways bringing urbanization closer to rural hinterland; demand for land for large infrastructure projects in urban hinterland – all of these factors have contributed to expansion of urban boundaries. Demand for land, coupled with absence of structured plans for designating land-use has led to speculative land markets and an insatiable appetite for urban land. Lack of transparency in the process of conversion of land, valuation of land, complexities in documentation and processes for holding/transferring clear title, etc. have only added to the bottlenecking of the supply of land, further accentuating land prices. The price and economic value of land increases, as the urban character of its surroundings changes. The time period of impending urbanization typically sees the process of conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural purposes.

¹ Technical Group constituted under the formulation of Eleventh Five-Year Plan estimates housing shortage to be around 24.71 million and 99 percent of the demand is from EWS and LIG group. “Urban Infrastructure, Housing, Basic Services and Poverty Alleviation”, p-411, Planning Commission.

In the absence of a structure plan, land owners and buyers tend to speculate on future urban form in that area, the potential uses the particular parcel of land can be put into, i.e. its economic value, and therefore its price. Therefore, it is desirable to have a simple and transparent land-use conversion processes that takes into account environmental considerations and larger public good.

Urban Local Body Level Reforms

E- Governance

The recent advances in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the Internet provide opportunities to transform the relationship between governments and citizens, as well as contribute to the achievement of good governance goals. E-governance will ensure that the interface between citizens and ULBs is made smooth and resolves the problems encountered by people at present. The use of ICT can help greatly in improved service delivery, decentralization, better information management and transparency, citizen involvement in government and overall improvement in urban governance across departments at all levels.

Accounting Reform

The importance of reliable information on municipal finances has come to the forefront as cities in India develop infrastructure projects that reflect principles of commercial viability and private sector participation. develop infrastructure projects that reflect principles of commercial viability and private sector participation. Better financial management is essential.

Currently, due to a lack of good financial management, and expenditure management ULBs are wasting scarce resources and are not able to hold municipal staff accountable. Most ULBs currently follow a cash basis of accounting, which provides inadequate information. Since, a statement of assets and liabilities is usually not prepared therefore a full picture of assets and liabilities is not readily available for appropriate financial management. There is inadequate cash management and delayed quality information for planning, decision-making and financial control. As apposed to cash basis, accrual basis is a superior method of accounting of the economic resources of

Urban Local Bodies. Under accrual accounting, recording of transactions and events takes place whenever a transaction occurs. Even if no cash is received or disbursed, the relevance, objectivity, timeliness, completeness and comparability of the accounting records and statements are much more enhanced. Accrual basis clearly distinguishes between items of a revenue nature and items of a capital nature

Rent Control Act

In most states the weaknesses and deficiencies in the current system of property taxation does not allow for full exploitation of the revenue potential of this tax. Property tax is one of the most under exploited tax instruments. To strengthen the financial autonomy of the local body, a holistic reform of the property tax system is essential. The present deficiencies occur due to the present assessment systems, poor administrative and information systems. Rental Value Basis is the system of property taxation followed in most Municipal Acts, where the annual value or the Annual Rental Value (ARV) of the property shall be deemed to be “the gross annual rent at which the land or buildings might, at the time of assessment, be reasonably expected to be let from year to year ...”

Capital Value Basis is another alternative. In many Municipal Acts there is an alternative provision for occupied) on a capital value basis. The annual value is arrived at on the basis of estimated market value of land and cost of construction at the time of construction or acquisition.assessment of properties (particularly those self occupied) on a capital value basis. The annual value is arrived at on the basis of estimated market value of land and cost of construction at the time of construction or acquisition.

ARV is restricted by Judicial Pronouncements. Over the last few decades a series of judgments by the Supreme Court have given a severe setback to the revenue aspirations of municipal bodies, since they are required to assess annual value for the levy of property tax on the basis of “fair rent” as determined under the relevant Rent Control Act, irrespective of the actual rent received, or whether a fair rent has been determined by a Rent Control Court or not. Even in the

cases where the municipal law provided for a non-obstinate clause, the Court ruled that the municipal authorities should not consider the actual rent as the only yardstick. It has been held that reasonable determination of rent by the municipal authorities needs application of mind; keeping in mind all relevant factors and circumstances. This immediately leads to a scope for subjective assessment and discretion at the level of the assessing officer, as well as subjective interpretation by the appellate authority.

User Charges

The rationale for user charge reform:

- Rational user charges provide financial stability and strengthen the ULBs/parastatals by effectively recovering all the costs associated with a particular urban service. Such financially viable user charges may even generate resources for expanding or upgrading the service. User charges enable ULBs/parastatals to provide services from a demand perspective. They encourage people to realize the need for conservation of precious resources by reducing wastage and optimizing usage.
- User charges can be used as a redistributive mechanism; differential tariffs can provide subsidies to the old and the poor.
- User charges enable allocative efficiency, that is, by fully recovering the operational costs of the urban service, ULBs/parastatals do not divert or consume resources meant for other services or sectors.

Internal Earmarking of Funds for the Urban Poor

Internal earmarking of funds for the urban poor in ULB budgets will ensure equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability of the local body:

Equity: All cities have some proportion of their population as urban poor. The current practice of a common budget having generic items has failed to provide a proportionate share in resource

allocation for urban poor. Though unintentional, this is because of systemic and structural limitations of the present municipal budgeting.

- The mechanism of a separate budget head or entirely separate budget with detailed budget items for urban poor under separate head will facilitate allocation of resources for the urban poor on an equitable basis.
- **Efficiency:** Separate budget head for urban poor welfare and detailed budget items under separate head and other respective service heads will improve efficiency in allocation and utilization of resources for the urban poor. It will also facilitate performance monitoring
- **Transparency:** Separate budget head for urban poor welfare and detailed budget items under this separate head and other respective service heads, including accounting of receipts and payments, will facilitate transparency. With such improved budget structure it would be easy to determine how much the ULBs are spending on the urban poor and under which head/budget item.
- **Accountability:** Performance monitoring will become easy and will help in fixing accountability for under or non-performance. Separate budget head for urban poor welfare and detailed budget items under this separate head, and other respective service heads for urban poor or separate budget structure is expected to have benefits for all stakeholders, namely citizens (urban poor) and the ULBs.

Basic Services for Urban Poor

The rationale for BSUP:

Urban poor constitute between 30 to 50 percent of the population of large cities. They contribute through their work, largely in the informal sector, to a city's economic growth. They provide the labour that drives urban infrastructure development. The poor also pay local taxes for goods and services purchased in the city.

- Providing access to basic services such as water supply, sanitation, power, roads, transport, housing, etc. helps improve the quality of life of the urban poor communities.
- Networking slums/squatters with city level infrastructure systems has the potential to improve the overall quality of city environment. This has ramifications for all; rich and poor alike. For example, providing drains for wastewater disposal in slums and linking these to off-site city drains will improve the overall quality of environment in the slum, as well as that of the city. Networking urban poor settlements with city infrastructure systems helps create “slum free” cities.
- Investing in upgrading slums and urban poor settlements and providing them with basic municipal services at a level that is equitable with that supplied to the rest of the city will help build sustainable cities.
- Providing legitimate services at an individual level to the poor for whom they pay as per their affordability will help improve cost recovery, reduce transmission losses and strengthen city's finances; and will help cities to make savings/generate additional resources for investment in future infrastructure development. Provision of legitimate services will help create an enabling environment for poor people to benefit from city economic growth.
- Providing affordable housing with tenure to poor families will make them less vulnerable and more secure. Secure tenure (patta) encourages urban poor families to invest and upgrade their housing. It also encourages them to connect and pay for municipal services inside their homes, i.e., metered water connections, toilets with sewerage, metered power supply, etc. This will also mean significant reductions in ULB's Operations and Management costs for common and free services such as community toilets and community stand-posts. Legal housing made available to women independently or jointly with men will help

empower them and improve their status. Over time, the poor can be fully integrated into the city and be included in the property tax net, adding to the city's revenues.

- Secure tenure for livelihood (place of work/micro enterprises) will enable urban poor to undertake formal economic activities/livelihoods. Participation in formal livelihoods will result in increased incomes. Access to social safety nets (pensions, paid leave, health care, etc.) and formal credit at low interest rates will reduce their indebtedness and protect their rights.

With legal access to municipal services, housing, etc. the poor will be able to “voice” their needs and demands during the planning of services. When people participate in planning of services, it ensures greater ownership and sustainability of public interventions. They will be able to voice their concerns/grievances related to service provision and will be able to hold ULBs accountable. In the long term, they will be able to effectively participate in city governance.

Optional Reforms

Revision of Building By-laws to Streamline the Approval Process

The objectives of simplifying the building rules are to:

- a. Make the building provisions development oriented with minimal parameters, but at the same time safeguarding public goods and concerns.
- b. Strengthen the building control and enforcement mechanism.
- c. Encourage gated and other developments (row housing, enclaves, group housing etc.) so as to inspire housing activity with quality infrastructure and facilities.

The need for the reform arises due to the fact that the procedure for acquiring sanction for building plans/obtaining building permit is very long drawn in most cities.

Revision of By-laws to Make Rainwater Harvesting Mandatory

The main objective of making rainwater harvesting mandatory in all buildings is to recharge groundwater and augment overall water availability. This measure will ensure that the rain falling on all buildings is tapped and directed to recharge groundwater aquifers or stored for direct consumption/use by occupants of buildings. With increasing population in urban areas, the municipal bodies and other public agencies are increasingly finding it difficult to supply water in adequate quantities to citizens. Often citizens use private tube wells to supplement the municipal supply for their daily needs.

Recharging ground water will raise aquifer levels and will help municipal and other public agencies to have access to larger quantities of groundwater. In alluvial areas, energy saving for 1m rise in ground water level is around 0.40 kilo watt per hour. Recharging aquifers will also reduce the requirement for additional financial resources for augmenting water supply.

Introduction of Computerized Process of Registration of Land and Property

Various committees and experts have underlined the adverse effects on the economy of the existence of the manual system of registration and consequently the need to replace them by a computerized system. As a matter of fact, several states have initiated reforms to adopt computerized systems of registration of property. However, several associated procedures like obtaining non-encumbrance certificate, deed writing, and valuation of property are still done manually. Andhra Pradesh is the only state, which has adopted software, which takes care of all these procedures. computerized systems of registration of property. valuation of property are still done manually. Andhra Pradesh is the only state, which has adopted software, which takes care of all these procedures.

By-Laws on re-use of recycled water

To meet the water demand for the growing population and to provide for protection against droughts, local governments must make the most efficient use of their water resources. Water recycling and reuse offer cost-effective and ecologically beneficial solutions. Water reuse involves using domestic wastewater from bathroom, kitchen, clothes washing and toilets a second time around, for an appropriate purpose after primary, secondary or tertiary treatment. This can be at an individual property level or at group housing level like apartment complexes or at community level.

Administrative Reforms

Administrative reforms under JNNURM seek to focus on issues related to people, and systems/processes. Reforms in structural issues of institutions of local government are dealt with a separate element i.e. 'Structural Reforms'.

Technically speaking, administrative reforms cut across various reform elements, and are not a stand-alone reform of a specific aspect of functioning of ULBs. Reforms in systems/processes have been addressed in a number of reform elements under JNNURM, both mandatory and optional, such as :

- Streamlined processes for public disclosure
- Administration of property taxes under property tax reforms
- Administration of user charges under user charge reforms
- Usage of information technology under E-Governance, which also requires re-engineering of business processes
- Implementation of modified accrual based accounting under Accounting Reforms.
- Streamlining processes for building plan approvals
- Reforms in processes for conversion of land-use, registration of transactions on land and property

- Streamlining processes for building plan Reforms in processes for conversion of land-use, registration of transactions on land and property

Structural reforms

Strength of an institution lies in its ability to respond to changes in the external environment. The vast and diverse sets of changes that have taken place in the urban context, requires Urban Local Bodies, other civic institutions and State Governments to respond through making long-lasting structural changes. The key rationale for prioritizing and undertaking structural reforms has been discussed earlier, viz. to enable the accomplishment and sustenance of other reforms under JNNURM in its true letter and spirit. Structural reforms are more difficult to implement, as it creates significant changes in status-quo – changes hierarchy and reporting relationships, requires realignment of many systems and processes, redefines responsibility, jurisdictions and mandates, and brings in new people into the structure that should be accommodated. Structural reforms cannot be easily undone or reversed. Therefore, the benefits of such reforms will surely endure beyond the tenure of elected councils, or tenure of elected or administrative leaders who would anchor such changes.

Encouraging Public-Private partnership

Cities are experiencing increasing pressure to provide accessible and affordable infrastructure and basic services due to rapid urbanization. At the same time, they are increasingly constrained in mobilizing the required financial and technical resources. Many cities do not have executive capacity to cope with the rising demand for water supply, sewerage, drainage, electricity supply, roads and solid waste management etc. Public Private Partnership (PPP) is considered a viable alternative to overcome the systemic problems and to infuse efficiency into the operation and maintenance of infrastructure, while bringing in much-needed capital to supplement public funds

Key Outcomes of the reform

JNNURM envisages the Urban Local Bodies achieve the following key outcomes at the end of the Mission period:

- Modern and transparent budgeting, accounting, financial management systems will be designed and adopted for all urban services and governance functions;
- City-wide framework for planning and governance will be established and become operational;
- The urban poor people will have access to a basic level of urban services—land tenure, affordable housing, water, sanitation, education, health, social security etc.;
- Financially self-sustaining agencies for urban governance and service delivery will be established through reforms to major revenue instruments;
- Local services and governance will be conducted in manner that is transparent and accountable to citizens;
- E-governance applications will be introduced in the core functions of ULBs resulting in reduced cost and time of service delivery processes.

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Critics Corner

Affordable Housing: Is it possible?

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Introduction

Background

Shelter is not only a basic human right but an essential requirement for all economic activity. It is the starting point for a person to organise his/her actions, stabilise his/her mind and undertake plans and programmes for doing something meaningful. Even simple housing for the homeless who live in shacks, made of thatch and leaves or tin roofed huts, increase the productivity of the inmates several-fold. But during the last three decades housing conditions for a vast majority of people have deteriorated in urban centres of Pakistan, mainly because of population explosion and rural-to-urban migration.

Twin problems of unregulated-urbanisation and shortage of affordable housing for the low-income groups, are the bane of almost all developing countries. But unfortunately neither its economic and sociological dimensions have seriously been studied nor efforts have been made to link the investment in housing to other development objectives by dovetailing educational, social, economic and environmental inputs with those of construction.

Basic reasons for rural to urban migration—an exodus of epic historic proportions—are the misconceived development strategies adopted both, in the rural and urban sectors. The land cannot provide the rural poor with a job, so migration in most cases is like a plea for employment, a courageous expression of the willingness to work more than the poor soil or the unjust society of their home area will allow them to.

When these poor, jobless migrants land up in the cities they find neither jobs in the formal sector nor affordable housing and having no other alternative, they tend to become part of the sprawling, ever-expanding squatters' slums. Some half-hearted attempts are no doubt made to solve the problem but these fail miserably mainly because the government's response to meet the shelter needs of the urban poor is not compatible with their sociology and economics. In the foreseeable future the urbanization trend cannot be stopped, reversed or altered, notwithstanding all high-pitched sloganeering and empty rhetoric. The question

is how to meet the housing needs of the burgeoning population (80% of whom are low-income)? Should we allow them to squat wherever they like and in whatever manner they like, and make the amelioration plans for them afterwards; or should the government meet their shelter needs on their arrival in the cities by providing them with bare necessities and keep on improving their living condition with their cooperation and participation gradually? Let us see what has happened in Pakistan.

Government response

The first government attempts in early sixties to provide low-cost built-up units at Korangi and Landhi in Karachi, failed because no government can provide housing at its own costs to every homeless person, even if loans from national and international agencies are arranged. Experiments like microvillas also failed because no effort was made to reach the target groups, nor the activities of various agencies were well coordinated. In the seventies, sites and services projects were launched in Karachi. However, the cost of land with all services was too high for the low-income groups. People belonging to the affluent middle class ultimately grabbed these plots, because they could afford to pay the high prices. Thus, the target group was elbowed out.

To overcome financial problems, the development authorities have now turned into developers. This means that projects are announced before they physically commence, and the public is asked to apply for a plot with advance payment. This system is now in vogue in most of the cities of Pakistan; and the development authorities amass huge sums of money, and keep them in fixed deposits, or use them in other projects. In some cases, the actual development may take 10 to 15 years. This method of providing plots has two severe limitations:

- a) In view of the huge backlog in housing (especially for the urban poor), these plots will always be in short supply resulting in speculation and rise in prices prohibiting the purchase of these plots by genuine buyers from the poor section of the population;

- b) Allottees/buyers generally do not purchase these plots for habitation. The plots are used as a sound investment and as a cushion against galloping inflation. It is an established fact that investment in real estate is a very safe and profitable business. People purchase plots as a cushion against inflation and for the dowry of their daughters. In view of these factors, whenever a scheme is announced, speculators with huge sums of money at their disposal make it almost impossible for the needy to get a plot in the ballot.

Apart from these fundamental problems, a number of practical problems further discriminate against the target group of low-income households:

- a) The cost is too high. Poor people with a monthly household income of Rs. 3500 or less cannot afford to pay 25% of the total cost which is usually demanded with the application as a down payment;
- b) Because of the time-lag between allotment and development, the schemes do not cater to the immediate needs of the low-income groups;
- c) To get a plot, people must apply for it, fill a set of forms and fulfill a whole series of formalities. Given the unequal relationship between the government and the people (especially the poor and illiterate), and given the time wasted in bureaucratic red tapism, even if they are willing to wait for years, the poor cannot and do not apply for these plots; and finally
- d) Even if they cross all the hurdles, it is not necessary that they get a plot. The number of applications always far exceeds the number of plots available. In most cases, successful allottees are investors and speculators.

As a result of these factors, huge housing schemes sites lie idle for protracted periods of time, while on the other hand the need for cheap housing keeps increasing since nothing is being done for the really needy groups.

Private and Cooperative Sector

Almost the same story applies to the provision of housing by the private sector, with the additional problem that in some cases the developers disappear after collecting money from the purchasers. The private developers no doubt cater to the need of the middle income groups, but the poorer section remains out of their purview as the smallest apartment would cost around Rs. 6,00,000. Similarly, a fully serviced plot of 120 square yards would cost around Rs. 3,00,000.

The time-lag between allotment and actual development of plots is sometimes even more than in the case of plots provided by the development authorities. In Karachi, in some schemes developed by the private sector, the plots have not been fully developed even after 25 years of allotment/sale. Even in low-cost built-up units scheme which were announced 20 years ago with much fanfare, houses constructed on plots of 84 square yards cost between Rs. 45,000 and 50,000 and in most of the cases, the down payment was around Rs. 8,000. In these schemes, external development is done by government agencies, which may take between 5 to 10 years. Very often, the supervision and the quality of construction is poor causing innumerable difficulties to the purchasers. Also joint venture schemes, such as were undertaken in Hyderabad have failed because of:

- i) Poor standard of work by the private developers
- ii) Delays in generating the funds
- iii) Poor supervision by the HDA staff
- iv) Lack of coordination between different agencies.

As regards cooperative movement, its performance in Pakistan is rather poor, but in the housing sector, it has catered to the need of the middle and higher income groups to some extent. In conclusion, very clearly, both government and private sectors' efforts to alleviate the low-income housing problem have grossly failed in the respects reviewed here.

Targeting has not been done. All the options offered

have been unaffordable to the poor. Allotment procedures often have been biased against the poor. Finally, the time-lag between allotment and actual development, a prior, excludes household with meager or no savings and in urgent need of shelter.

Emergence of Katchi Abadis

In contrast to this, it is of interest to see that illegal subdivisions have been, and are being catered quite successfully in bigger cities as an informal solution to the problem. These subdivisions have the following characteristics:

- 1) They are generally created on the periphery of the city;
- 2) They are planned on grid-iron, official planning regulations and do not pose problems with regard to the town plans;
- 3) Water is made available either on payment or through civic agencies;
- 4) Transport needs are taken care of;
- 5) the cost is affordable even by the poorer section of the population. In some cases, no profit is charged, because some of the commercial plots are kept in reserve for disposal at high commercial rates to subsidize the development costs of smaller residential plots;
- 6) Technical advice for construction and sanitary problems is informally available;
- 7) Immediate possession is handed over to the purchasers with little or no paper work;
- 8) Credit is also made available in cash or kind, if needed;
- 9) Availability of artisanal skills is assured;
- 10) Protection from eviction is guaranteed in 90% of the cases, as these developers have very close liaison with the police and government agencies.

The development strategy of the illegal subdivision is successful because it is compatible with the socio-economic condition of the urban poor. The extent of its success can be judged from the fact that this kind of development keeps growing rapidly inspite of increasing restrictions from the officialdom. However, these new informal settlements face three major problems:

1. They cannot manage to obtain a bulk sewage disposal system as this requires huge financial outlays and complicated techniques;
2. Although there is no imminent threat of eviction, the title to land remains a major issue as the developers grab either government or private land without paying the owners. Without title papers, getting official loans selling the plots poses problems;
3. External roads are not developed as huge investments are required for this purpose and government agencies refuse to take up this work because they consider these colonies to be illegal and unauthorized areas.

It may be mentioned here that before these illegal subdivisions started, spontaneous growth of katchi abadis had already taken place in cities like Karachi, Lahore and Hyderabad. Unlike these sub-divisions, old katchi abadis had the following important characteristics:

- a) They were mostly located right in the heart of the city
- b) Their growth was haphazard
- c) They had no regular plans; streets were narrow; space for schools; mosques; playgrounds etc. did not exist
- d) No land grabber was involved in the process.

These settlements emerged in larger cities immediately after partition and soon all the available spaces were occupied by squatters. Thereafter, the demand for land grew because of industrial policy, but the state was not able to meet it. As a response to growing need, the phenomenon of illegal sub-division started at the periphery, which still continues and has been described in the preceding paragraphs. Now the question is: Can the government follow the strategy adopted by the illegal developers, or to put it more succinctly: Can the informal sector be formalized? The government has two options: either it should integrate the private developers into its own strategy or, alternatively, adopt the strategy followed by the developers. Khuda-ki-Basti answers some of these questions.

The New Approach

Basic Concept

While working as Director General of Hyderabad Development Authority (1985-90) the author of the paper and his team studied these problems closely and then carried out an experiment to have an answer to the question posed in the last chapter. The basic concept of the experiment was that plots were to be allotted to the neediest persons at price they could afford. Services such as internal water supply, sewerage, road, electricity and gas to be provided as the allotted pay their monthly installments. The development of the scheme was incremental; the internal services were limited to the basics, at the start only the communal water supply and public transport to the city centre were provided.

Only in the longer run, house-to-house water connection, sewerage, electricity and road paving were furnished when through monthly installments; the allotted had accumulated sufficient money to finance them. The installments were fixed at Rs. 100 per month. The total price of fully serviced 80 sq. yds. plot was Rs. 9, 600. In this way the project was fully SELF-FINANCING without any element of subsidy from the government. The entry fee covered cost of land and charges of water supply provided to the allottees through public stand posts. Speed and standard of development thus depended on installments, and the financial risk of the public agency was minimized as the work carried out on deposit basis and not on recovery basis.

In principle, the inhabitants could decide for themselves to which facility they wanted to give priority. On the other hand, in order to quickly obtain certain facilities, the inhabitants of several blocks accumulated funds far in excess of their due installments. Besides, standards prescribed pertained only to those items which cannot be changed later. Only the layout of the scheme was fixed and absolutely no standards were imposed otherwise as to the quality or plan of the houses. These prices pertain to 1986. With regard to the allotment procedure in particular, HDA sought and found ways to reach the target group, and to exclude those who do not intend to live in the

scheme after acquiring their plots. After a number of unsuccessful attempts to actively recruit allottees from existing squattments, it was concluded that households genuinely interested in owning shelter in the scheme would select themselves by coming with the whole family and all their household goods to live in the area. Therefore, a "reception area" was installed in the scheme where households had to put up temporarily, or where they could rent a simple one or two roomed houses. Subsequently, after some days, they were assigned a plot on which they had to start living and building immediately. The reception area served as a rather efficient filter to exclude those who wanted plots of land for investment only.

The administrative part too was characterized by simplicity and straight forwardness. The procedure was that households could apply for a plot by just settling in the reception area. Their presence in the reception area was an application for a plot on which they could live and build after having passed through the reception area.

However, legally valid allotment orders would only be issued when all installments had been paid. In this way HDA had a means to cancel plots of those who leave the scheme. In such cases, those who left were compensated (although they suffered some loss), and the plot was assigned to another family.

The important aspects of the scheme are summarized as under:

1. Utmost care was taken to discourage speculators and the affluent middle classes. This was ensured by:
 - i) Demarcating a very large number of plots so that there is no premium on the sale of plots.
 - ii) Not issuing ownership documents unless the house is built, the allotted starts residing there and clears his development charges.
 - iii) Fixing a very short period for starting the construction work, the construction is to start at once while living on the plot.

- iv) Initiating a new approach for selection and allocation: by accommodating those applicants only who bring their family and household goods to the reception area.
 - v) The continuous possession by the beneficiary of the plot is the eligibility of his entitlement to the plot.
 - vi) If the plot was found vacant, the HDA was at liberty to cancel the reservation to some other eligible applicant.
2. The scheme aimed at organizing further development activity on cooperative basis (at the level of a sector or lane) so that:
- i) Dues were paid and collected by the allotted in time.
 - ii) Development costs were reduced by ensuring supervision by the allottees themselves. It was also planned that all the development works, should be done by the allottees themselves in order to reduce cost, as was successfully done in the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi in the case of providing sewerage disposal facilities. It was observed that costs were reduced by 30%, if government agencies and contractors were not involved in development work, because the elements of corruption and profiteering were eliminated to a great extent.
 - iii) The scheme would also take care of the bulk sewerage disposal problem, which is ignored in the case of informal development.
 - iv) HDA's site office provided all advisory services at the door step, while most of the paper work, which was minimal in any case, was done by them. Though model plans were provided to the allotted, the use of locally available material and self - employment in construction activity was encouraged in order to reduce costs.
 - v) The scheme did not eliminate the role of the 'informal' sector totally. Block makers/thallawala (who provide advisory services as well as construction material on credit) were allowed to operate in the area. Only their roles as land-grabbers and developers had been controlled. This reduced initial payment towards the cost of land to very large extent. For example, if an illegal developer used to charge Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 8,000 for a 120 square yards plot, HDA would only charge an amount of Rs. 1,000 for a 80 square yards plot initially, plus Rs. 100 per month at subsequent stages.
- Perhaps, one of the most difficult problems in the execution was breaking through the established tradition of government housing scheme to attract investors and speculators rather than those in need of housing. Only through a process of trial and error has HDA found a way to exclude the former and reach the latter in Khuda-ki-Basti.
- Replicability**
- The scheme has all the possibilities and potential of replicability because:
- a) It is entirely self-financing - there is no element of subsidy, formal or non-formal - entire cost of the developed plot (which is Rs. 9,600) is being borne by the beneficiaries in easy installments spread over a period of eight years
 - b) It is amazingly simple in approach and all procedures are transparent because no paper work is involved and no experts are needed. Further more, only 3-4 junior officials manage the entire scheme
 - c) It is highly flexible from planning to execution - modification and adjustments can be made keeping local conditions in view - only the basic concept has to be adhered to
 - d) Provision of services has been linked with cost recovery. Therefore, there is no risk of losing the

money, which generally happens in public housing schemes

- e) Cheap technology is used for construction of houses keeping in view the local climatic conditions and socio-economic status of the allottee, who are encouraged to innovate and improvise (as a matter of fact a learning atmosphere has been created for other activities as well like income-generating schemes, home schools etc.)
- f) Flexible planning and building control standards are used-no restrictions are imposed on autonomy to build. Allottees can start with a reed hut if they like.

The incremental development approach adopted in Khuda-ki-Basti has successfully been replicated at Gharo (near Thatta) and Taiser Town, Karachi in collaboration with Malir Development Authority. Near Kalu Shah Kaku, Lahore a scheme has been launched by 'Saiban' by purchasing private land. Besides, Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority has also launched four identical schemes in the interior of Sindh.

Recently, a private company has also been registered in Lahore, and it plans to launch its first incremental on 100 acres.

Efforts are afoot to launch a social housing programme in collaboration with HBFC. Initial paper work has been completed, and it is expected that the Social Housing Company will be registered by the end of current year.

Conclusion

The scheme has shown that even without bringing about basic changes in the society's power structure, without changing unequal relationship between the government and the katchi abadi dwellers, and even without any definite political programme in favour of the poor, development authorities can successfully assume the role of the informal sub-dividers and follow their strategies at least partially. It convincingly shows that HDA's Incremental Housing Scheme

provides a viable housing alternative for the most urgent cases amongst the renters and the new comers. This fact gains importance when we consider the present trend towards more difficult access to owned housing in the informal market, and resulting densification and increase of renting and doubling up in existing squattments.

When compared with traditional sites and services projects, it appears that in Khuda-ki-Basti almost all of the usual problems have been overcome to an amazing extent. In contrast to a number of present trends in sites and services, the case of Khuda-ki-Basti shows:

- a) That a public agency can handle such a project efficiently,
- b) That – given a chance – the small scale, informal sector is capable of moving up market, so that there is no need to invent incentives to convince the formal private sector to move down market,
- c) That the accusation that by this sort of scheme the authorities are creating slums evidently does not hold water.

Finally, a comparison with illegal sub-division demonstrates that HDA's scheme not only provides building sites and services more cheaply and more efficiently, but at the same time manipulation and exploitation of the poor is substantially reduced. This is because of security of tenure which is lacking in the illegal sub-division.

The experience of IDS shows that the poorer section of the population can be successfully reached. In this scheme the population as low as 17th percentile has been reached. The mechanism of the scheme is simple enough for replication with a minimum investment as the shelter package of IDS consists of only the basics i.e. land and water. The scale of the scheme will however depend on the size of the city. For Hyderabad

a city of 1.0 million persons in the year 1985, the total scale of the scheme was 100 hectares to start with. On the same lines a city of 5 million could require 500 hectares and so on.

A question can be asked:

If this scheme was feasible and could be implemented without facing any major problem, why was it not possible for other development agencies or the government to work on these lines?

Partial answer of this question can be:

1. Bureaucrats all over the world are status-quo oriented. Their characteristics do not include imagination, creativity & innovation. They go for hackneyed solutions and are prone to follow stereotyped patterns. Most of them are risk-averse. Nor do they have guts to face opposition from the well entrenched groups.
2. Development strategies like site and services; built up units etc. give them and their bosses' a lot of discretion/opportunity in doling out favours and also chances for misusing government funds. (It is an admitted position that at least 30 to 40% funds are siphoned off in every development project).
3. Poor people have no constituency in our country. Nobody listens to them. They simply do not matter. We are an elitist society, and therefore, all our policies have a non-egalitarian orientation.
4. For schemes like incremental development, you have to work very hard. You have to have a team of very dedicated, sincere and selfless people which is quite difficult in these days of 'functional anarchy' and 'institutional exhaustion'.
5. Why would our bureaucrats go for this option when they are otherwise better off and get

promotions, political protection, heaps of illegal money, and to cap it all cheap publicity by adopting elitist policies?

To influence changes in development norms and procedures, however simple they may be, as is the case with IDS, it will be necessary to have its conceptual acceptance both by bureaucrats and politicians. Only then its wider replicability can be ensured. This is a slow process as all new ideas take a lot of time to germinate.

At the same time, in the long run, government will have to surrender a large measure of its power. This will also necessitate a change in the unequal relationship between the government agencies and the poorer section of the society. Again the question is: Are these things really possible? Will the well-entrenched groups in politics and bureaucracy allow this to happen?

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These guidelines are intended to help authors for submission of papers to the Journal.

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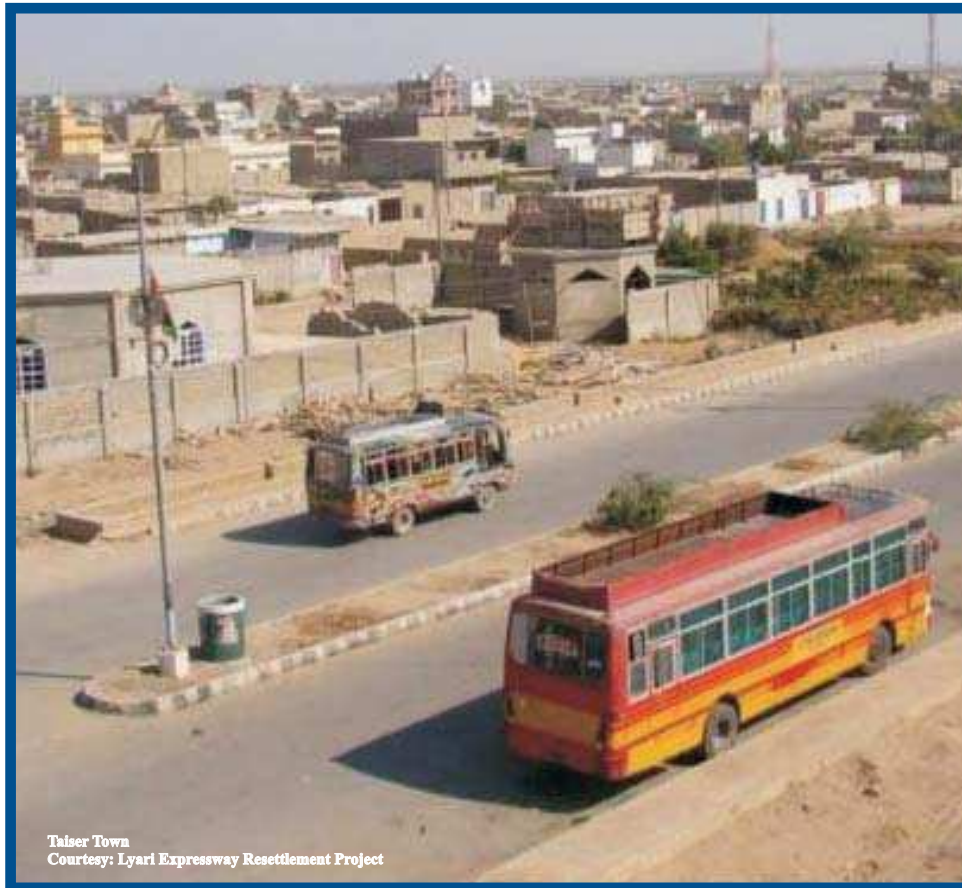
The editorial team of Pakistan Journal of Urban Affairs will encourage high quality papers based on empirical research contributed by a range of experts working in different fields, e.g. technical professionals (urban planners/architects/engineers and environmental scientists), policy makers, social scientists, private sector specialists, development practitioners, urban economists/economists, and academia from Pakistan and abroad. A concerted effort of researchers and experts belonging to different sectors will ensure that public and private sectors in Pakistan move toward sustainable urban development goals, in conjunction with economic and social development, 'without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs'. (World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future, 1987).

It is important to mention here that the premise of this research and development initiative is - to emphasize the multitude of urban development challenges; and to generate scientific discourse leading to sustainable strategic and policy options leading toward improved decision making and a better urban future. Moreover, the Pakistan Journal of Urban Affairs is being published by the Government of Punjab, yet the focus is national; because the current urban development issues faced by Pakistan call for an integrated and sustainable strategy for development.

Pakistan Journal of Urban Affairs welcomes submission of papers from a broad spectrum of scholars, practitioners, researchers and public sector professionals. Research papers are expected to be - policy based; solution oriented; a sound critique/analysis of existing projects; and a platform to propose new strategies for tackling issues related to urbanization. Coverage of topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Urban Governance: urban planning, public service delivery (urban transport, urban water and sanitation, urban solid waste management) privatization of urban service delivery, urban security.
- Urban Growth and Development: political economy of urbanization, urban sprawl and suburbanization.
- Urban Economy: urban employment generation and issues, rural-urban migration, food security, poverty and urbanization.
- Urban Environment: Urban environment and impact assessment, urban pollution, urbanization and climate change, urban environment policy, sustainable urban ecology.
- Urban Living: urban housing, urban spatial management, preservation, conservation, restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction of cultural heritage.
- Research and Development: Critical role of academic research and scholarship for R&D in urban issues, urbanization and education, social sustainability and urbanization.

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Cover Page: Lyari Expressway Resettlement Project involves the shifting and resettlement of a large segment of population on both sides of the Lyari River (inside and outside).

Back Page: Taiser Town is one such development of plots for the affectees of Right of Way providing all civic facilities.



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